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at 11 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 57th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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10 January 1992

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 146: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ADVANCE MISSION IN CAMBODIA (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.6

1. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.6 on behalf of the Chairman and recommended it for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

2. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that, according to the cost estimate for the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia, most of the military personnel were to receive a mission subsistence allowance. That appeared to be a departure from established practice, whereby reimbursement was made to troop-contributing States, based on the standard procedures and rates. According to the model agreements between the United Nations and troop-contributing countries, in the case of formed bodies of military personnel who were sent on peace-keeping missions, exceptions to that practice could be made if the troops were not provided with accommodations or meals. In most cases, however, troop contributors were reimbursed at the rate of $988 per person per month. In the case of the Mission in Cambodia, most military personnel, although they would be sent in formed bodies, were to be granted a daily subsistence allowance of $111, or more than $3,300 per month. He wondered whether there had been any change in the Secretariat's policy concerning the standard rates of reimbursement. It was his delegation's understanding that the Advance Mission was part of a larger operation to be launched in 1992; accordingly, the proposed arrangements might set a precedent.

3. Mr. ANNAN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that there had been no change in policy and that, despite certain peculiarities of the Advance Mission in Cambodia, it would not set a precedent.

4. Mr. HOSANG (Unit for Peace-Keeping Matters and Special Assignments) said that the standard rates of reimbursement had been established by the General Assembly; reimbursement would continue to be made to troop-contributing States unless they indicated to the Secretary-General that they were offering the services of their troops as a voluntary contribution. The allowance in question was intended to cover the food requirements of the Mission personnel, since the Organization was not in a position to provide mess service; it had no connection to the reimbursement arrangements.

5. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) and Mr. AHMED (Iraq) drew attention to drafting errors in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Arabic version of the draft resolution.

6. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.6 was adopted.

7. Mr. MORDACQ (France), explaining his delegation's position on the draft resolution just adopted, said that two countries had provided large voluntary contributions estimated at $8 million, well in advance of the preparation of the budget for the Mission; without those contributions, the total budget estimate of $14 million would be unrealistic. He urged the Secretariat to ensure that budget figures reflected the real circumstances. It was important that voluntary contributions should be announced at an early stage and that they should be taken into account by the Secretariat in the preparation of budgets for peace-keeping operations.

AGENDA ITEM 136: FINANCING OF THE ACTIVITIES ARISING FROM SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 687 (1991) (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.7)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.7

8. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Chairman and recommended it for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

9. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.7 was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 118: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.9)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.9

10. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Chairman and recommended it, with minor drafting changes, for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

11. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.9 was adopted.

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.10

12. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Chairman and recommended it for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

13. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.10 was adopted.

14. Mr. CONMY (Ireland), explaining his delegation's position on the second draft resolution just adopted, said that his Government continued to be concerned at the shortfall in the account of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon as a result of large arrears owed by Member States. Although he welcomed the partial payments made by some Member States, the amounts outstanding were significant and placed an unfair burden on troop-contributing countries, including Ireland.

15. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba), explaining her delegation's position on the two draft resolutions just adopted, said that although Cuba's views concerning the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force remain unchanged, it had decided to join the consensus.

16. Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran), explaining his delegation's position on the two draft resolutions just adopted, said that, had there been a vote, his country would have abstained, and he wished to place on record its reservations.

AGENDA ITEM 120: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.11)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.11

17. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the chairman and recommended it for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

18. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.11 was adopted.

19. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that there was an inconsistency in the texts of all the draft resolutions just adopted, in that they indicated both the net and the gross amounts. He wondered whether it would be possible to correct the texts before they were considered by the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

20. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) said that the texts had been drafted in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; no errors in methodology had been pointed out so far.

21. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that, while his comments should not be taken as implying any criticism of the coordinator of the consultations on the draft resolutions, his delegation felt that a case could be made for indicating net appropriations and assessments, since for most Member States, the basis of assessment was the net appropriation.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that note would be taken of the previous speaker's statement.

23. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that he not only wished for note to be taken of his statement, but also requested either an indication that the net amounts could be reflected in the texts to be submitted to the General Assembly or, at least confirmation from the Secretariat that the net amounts indicated in the corresponding report of the Advisory Committee (A/46/774) were authoritative.

24. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that he supported the proposal made by the United Kingdom representative; his delegation, too, had been aware of the discrepancy, and would have raised the issue if time had permitted.

25. Mr. ANNAN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that the proposed correction would be reflected in the text to be transmitted to the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 122: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER GROUP IN CENTRAL AMERICA (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.12)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.12

26. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Chairman and recommended it for adoption by the Committee without a vote.

27. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, as the text of the draft resolution had been submitted only a short time earlier, delegations had not had sufficient time to study it.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

28. Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.12 was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 109: CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/46/600 and Add.1, A/46/765; A/C.5/46/CRP.5)

AGENDA ITEM 110: FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/46/600 and Add.1, A/46/765; A/C.5/46/CRP.5)

29. Mr. GREGG (Australia) said that the informal consultations on the financial situation of the United Nations had, unfortunately, failed to produce consensus, owing to the short time available. He believed that, given more time, the Committee would be able to arrive at a substantive resolution on the item. There was consensus, however, on the importance of the issue and he therefore stressed that its consideration should be resumed as soon as possible.

30. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take up the item again when the forty-sixth session resumed early in 1992. He further proposed that the Fifth Committee should set aside a period of three to four days to allow for a full substantive discussion of the matter. The dates of the resumed session would be made known sufficiently in advance to enable delegations to make the necessary arrangements.

31. It was so decided.

32. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, regretted that the Committee had been unable to take a decision on the financial crisis of the Organization. When the item had been introduced, the Controller had pointed out that the Organization required a better resource base to meet the growing demands which would be made on it in the future. The Controller had noted that the issue of improving the Organization's resources was separate from any current question of short-term cash-flow problems.

33. Australia, Canada and New Zealand did not share the belief of some Member States that the Organization's financial problems were due exclusively to the non-payment or late payment of contributions, but were convinced that, even with full payment of assessments, the Organization's working capital base was insufficient to permit it to respond effectively to new demands.

34. During the general discussion of the item, Canada had urged Member States to work for consensus on at least the less controversial proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report and, in the light of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/765), had also maintained that the Committee could proceed on the recommendations concerning a reserve account for peace-keeping operations.

35. Unfortunately, some delegations continued to see technical problems in the resolution, which prevented them from taking a decision in principle. It was essential to resolve those problems at the resumed session. In addition, he urged those delegations which saw a direct relationship between problems with the payment of assessments, on the one hand, and the request to increase the reserves, on the other, to give the proposals careful and detached consideration, in the hope that they would rethink their positions and realize the need, in particular, for a peace-keeping reserve fund.

36. He suggested that the issue of the peace-keeping reserve fund should perhaps be separated in the agenda from the overall issue of the Organization's financial crisis, in order that it received the dispassionate attention it deserved.

37. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that his delegation regretted the need to defer the decision on the item. The Secretary-General had been correct in identifying the failure of Member States to pay their assessments as the root cause of the problem. His delegation favoured a resolution that included specific measures to address the problem of the payment of assessments. To increase the Organization's financial reserves without such measures would place an unfair burden on those States that did pay their assessments in full.

38. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) and Mr. CAVAGLIERI (Italy) said that their delegations wished to associate themselves with the reservations expressed by the representative of the Netherlands.

39. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that the issue of the start-up costs of a peace-keeping reserve fund was one of great importance and it should not be dealt with in a hasty or superficial manner. His delegation agreed, however, that there was an urgent need to increase the reserve fund for financing the start-up costs of peace-keeping operations; the problem would not be solved merely by changing the name of the account and transferring resources into it from another account.

40. Mr. MORDACQ (France) said that his delegation supported the reservations expressed by the representative of the Netherlands. He suggested that, when the General Assembly resumed its discussion of the issue, it should consider separating the accounts of the regular budget from peace-keeping accounts. Under the provisions of its draft resolution on the Working Capital Fund for the biennium 1992-1993, contained in document A/C.5/46/L.18 (Part IV) and adopted by the Committee at the preceding meeting, the Secretary-General was authorized to draw from other accounts in his custody, including the account for peace-keeping operations, when the Working Capital Fund was exhausted. The Secretary-General had been obliged to make such arrangements to ensure the short-term financing of the Organization. While France understood the Secretary-General's predicament, it believed that contributions by Member States for peace-keeping purposes should not serve directly for the financing of regular budget expenses and hoped that maintaining separate regular budget and peace-keeping accounts would become an established practice in the future.

AGENDA ITEM 114: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/46/L.20)

41. Mr. COMMY (Ireland) said that the scale of assessments was of vital importance to the Organization as a whole and to the individual Member States and that each Member State regarded the scale from both points of view. The resolution contained in document A/C.5/46/L.20 was a consensus text, achieved, in the best traditions of the Committee, through a spirit of compromise and accommodation, despite the fact that no delegation had been able to accept all the provisions of the resolution without difficulty.

42. He drew attention, in particular, to the provisions of part B, paragraph 4, requesting the Committee on Contributions to make efforts to minimize the allocation of additional points to developing countries, which should be read in the light of paragraph 3 (f) of the same part, concerning the phasing out of the scheme of limits over two three-year scale periods.

43. While the Fifth Committee acknowledged the need for the biennialization of its work, in order to give proper consideration to all issues, it felt that the importance of the scale of assessments warranted referral of three elements of the draft resolution, to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly for further consideration. He hoped, however, that in the near future the scale of assessments would no longer require consideration on an annual basis. He commended the draft resolution to the Committee for adoption without a vote.

44. Mr. THIRUNAGARAN (Singapore) said that his delegation had shared the spirit of consensus which had informed negotiations on the draft resolution but, nevertheless, wished to place on record its grave reservations concerning the suggested phasing out of the scheme of limits. Singapore regretted that the Committee was adopting the draft resolution before the Committee on Contributions had made relevant recommendations to the General Assembly, under the provisions of resolution 45/256. In its report (A/46/11), the Committee on Contributions had detailed its work on that matter and, noting its inability to complete that work owing to constraints of time, had declared that it was premature at the current stage to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the preservation, abolition or modification of the scheme of limits. In the light of that assertion, Singapore believed that it was precipitate to consider phasing out the scheme of limits and felt that the Committee on Contributions should have been given adequate time to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly.

45. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

46. It was so decided.

47. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba), explaining her delegation's position on the draft resolution just adopted, said that while Cuba had joined the consensus, it had serious reservations concerning paragraph 2 of section B, dealing with the scheme of limits. She agreed with the comments made by the representative of Singapore concerning paragraph 62 of document A/46/11. In that light, paragraph 2 (a) was regrettable and should in no way prejudge the decision to be taken on the future of the scheme of limits. A final decision would be taken when the Committee on Contributions submitted its report at the forty-seventh session. The same considerations applied to paragraphs 3 (f) and 4.

48. Similarly, her delegation had reservations concerning paragraph 2 (c), which provided no specific guidelines on the debt problem. The formulation adopted should have taken into account the need for a genuine and definitive statement on that issue to be made at the forty-seventh session. Cuba hoped that the study to be submitted by the Committee on Contributions in 1992 would contain alternative proposals for determining the base period. Consideration should be given to reducing the base period in accordance with any change in the application of the scheme of limits. Her delegation also hoped that the Committee on Contributions would submit final proposals concerning the various elements in paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, since any decision on possible changes in the current methodology could be taken only after the views of the Committee on Contributions had been received.

49. Adequate support should be given to the Committee on Contributions so that it would be able to present a report at the forty-seventh session on all the elements in the draft resolution. Such support could take the form of extending the Committee's session, as it would be regrettable if the concerns of Member States could not be fully satisfied owing to lack of time.

50. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that he had serious reservations about the growing complexity of the methods used to determine the scale of assessments and strongly supported the fundamental principle of capacity to pay. Those reservations did not affect the position of the European Community on the scheme of limits and the gradient, or on the proposals which the Committee on Contributions would make in 1992. With regard to the position of developing countries, the European Community reaffirmed that national income was the main criterion in determining capacity to pay. He stressed the need for the Committee on Contributions to continue its work on developing alternative income concepts.

51. Mr. DINU (Romania) said that the negotiations on the resolution had been fraught with difficulty and had only succeeded thanks to the realization by delegations that they must accept one another's concerns, subordinate their individual interests and avoid seeking scapegoats. In that spirit, his delegation had not pressed its proposal concerning the period of a future illustrative scale, realizing that a fragile compromise could not be amended. His delegation remained convinced, however, of the merits of its proposal and intended to resubmit it at a later stage. It had gladly joined the consensus on the text and paid tribute to the representative of Ireland for his tact, patience, impartiality and skill in conducting the negotiations.

52. Mr. BELHAJ (Tunisia) said that his delegation maintained its reservations concerning the concept of the mitigation process and on the way mitigation points had been distributed by the Committee on Contributions at the previous session. Tunisia would have liked to see in the draft resolution a paragraph conveying the concern of the General Assembly at the absence of any explanation on the issue of the distribution of mitigation points and would have liked to see, in part C of the draft resolution, a better reflection of the need for the Committee to hold informal meetings prior to the proposal of any new scale, in order to be fully aware of the situation of all Member States and to take into account relevant factors concerning not only the distribution of mitigation points, but also the establishment of a realistic scale.

53. Mr. SHIN (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution despite strong reservations concerning the proposed rate of assessment for his country. In his view, the principles of universality and fairness had been disregarded when the Committee on Contributions chose to ignore the hypothetical rate and the scheme of limits for the Republic of Korea. No argument presented during the informal consultations had persuaded his delegation of the contrary and on technical grounds it remained unable, therefore, to accept the Committee's proposed rate. However, in the spirit of international cooperation and consensus, the Republic of Korea had decided to accommodate the Committee in its recommendation, and it hoped that its contributions would be utilized in the best manner to further the noble objectives of the United Nations.

54. Mr. LAOUARI (Algeria) thanked the representative of Ireland for his efforts in coordinating the informal discussions on the scale of assessments, and reiterated that Algeria had always taken a positive and responsible attitude towards its contributions to the United Nations. However, the increase in Algeria's assessment did not seem fully justified in view of the country's increasingly difficult economic plight. Moreover, those elements of the draft resolution dealing with the scheme of limits seemed to be based on subjective political considerations rather than any technical recommendation clearly formulated by the Committee. For many developing countries, the level of their assessment, and therefore any change in that assessment, was a serious matter. There was no justification for a decision on the scheme of limits until the General Assembly had had a chance to take a position on recommendations of the Committee on Contributions.

55. The phasing out of the scheme of limits should be accompanied by specific provisions to avoid any penalty for the developing countries who had thus far benefited from the scheme.

56. In its work on improving the methodology, the Committee on Contributions should seek daring and innovative corrective measures so as to arrive at the fairest and most balanced scales of assessment possible, faithfully reflecting States' true capacity to pay. Its work should not be selective but should encompass all elements that might improve those methods.

57. Mr. GREGG (Australia) said that the negotiations on the scale of assessments had finally produced a good result in spite of the difficult circumstances, and that that success was in no small measure due to the efforts of the representative of Ireland.

58. Mr. AHMED (Iraq) said that his delegation's acquiescence in the consensus on draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.20 in no way meant that it agreed with all its provisions. Iraq's position on the increase in its assessment had not changed. He called on the Committee on Contributions to review the matter and to calculate Iraq's assessment in the light of its changed economic situation.

59. Iraq continued to have reservations regarding paragraphs 2 (a), 3 (f) and 4 of part B of the resolution, which dealt with the phasing out of the scheme of limits. Those paragraphs seemed to his delegation to be in contradiction to paragraph 62 of the Committee on Contributions' report (A/46/11). The Fifth Committee would have done better to wait for a final decision on the matter by the Committee on Contributions.

60. His delegation welcomed the statements of Algeria and Cuba.

61. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation had supported the draft resolution in a spirit of cooperation and in the interests of consensus. He understood that the General Assembly was asking the Committee on Contributions to study possible changes in methodology, as indicated in paragraph 3 of part B. Japan called on the Committee on Contributions to carry out that study with the utmost care and prudence.

62. Mr. AL-DOSARI (Bahrain) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution out of a desire to ensure the successful outcome of the Fifth Committee's work; however, it still had serious reservations as to the scale of assessments, in particular the increase in Bahrain's own assessment.

63. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) said that his delegation had strong reservations on the paragraphs dealing with the scheme of limits. Like other delegations, it thought that the plan to phase out the scheme of limits was premature, and hoped that the Committee on Contributions would be undertaking a study of the matter in the coming year.

64. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the contribution of each Member State should be based on its capacity to pay, but that that principle was distorted in practice by a number of elements. The draft resolution failed to address the problem of how to eliminate those distorting elements. The Soviet Union had nevertheless joined the consensus on the draft resolution in the full awareness that the Committee on Contributions would be guided in its work by the clearly expressed views of the General Assembly, particularly in regard to the phasing out of the scheme of limits, which was one of the main distorting factors.

65. Mr. BLUKIS (Latvia), speaking also on behalf of Lithuania and Estonia, said that all three Governments took their United Nations responsibilities seriously. Uncertainties remained with regard to their national budgets and they were studying ways of making contributions even before their assessment was formally established.

66. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that the consensus that had been reached based on the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions was fully supported by his delegation, and paid tribute to the representative of Ireland for his work in coordinating the draft resolution.

67. Mr. AL-ARIMI (Oman) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on the resolution with some difficulty in view of the alarming increase of Oman's assessment.

68. His delegation had stated during the informal consultations on paragraph 2 (a) that for the time being the scheme of limits should not be abolished. It had repeatedly referred to paragraph 62 of the Committee on Contributions' report (A/46/11), which had stated that it was premature to abolish the scheme. Oman would not like to see the assessment of developing countries raised.

69. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) said that his delegation was far from satisfied with the decision just taken on the scale of assessments for two reasons. First, the method used to calculate the assessments of Member States was flawed and unfair to developing countries. Moreover, his delegation felt that the deliberations on the scale of assessments had not been aimed at improving that

(Mr. Duhalt, Mexico)

situation. Secondly, some elements in the procedure by which the Committee on Contributions had set the scale just adopted seemed at odds with previous decisions of the General Assembly. His delegation hoped that Member States' views would be taken into account in that regard in future.

70. The CHAIRMAN paid tribute to the representative of Ireland and to all delegates who had taken part in the informal discussions and had done their best to achieve consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 105: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.16

71. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland) said that in the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.20, she would like to propose an amendment to the programme of work for 1992 contained in the annex to draft resolution A/C.5/46/L.16: a new item 9, "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations" would be added after the existing item 8.

72. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) asked whether the proposed addition would result in the elimination of part D of the annex to the draft resolution, which also dealt with the scale of assessments.

73. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland) said that it would not.

74. The draft resolution was adopted.

75. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation considered the draft resolution just adopted a step forward, but thought that biennialization in itself was not enough; other points to be considered included the length of the session, the scheduling of formal and informal discussions, inter-sessional contacts, and assistance and briefing of delegates by the Secretariat.

76. His delegation considered that the work that had been begun by the Committee should be actively pursued so as to make the work of the Fifth Committee more efficient and productive.

The meeting rose at 2.25 p.m.